

REMARKS

Election

The Applicant affirms the election with traverse of species IV, claims 1 and 8-10.

Drawings

The drawings have been amended to show all of the features specified in the claims, as required by the Examiner.

35 USC § 112

The Examiner objected to claim 9 under 35 USC § 112, contending that claim 9 was indefinite. Claim 9 has been amended to clarify that the flanges may be inserted into and removed from sliding engagement with the edges of the circumferential surface. It is submitted that claim 9 now complies with 35 USC § 112.

Rejections based on the Prior Art

The Examiner rejected claims 1, 8 and 10 under 35 USC § 102(e), contending that the subject matter of these claims was disclosed in U.S. Patent No. 6,604,321 (the '321 patent). The Examiner rejected claim 9 under 35 USC § 103(a), contending that the subject matter of this claim would have been obvious in light of the '321 patent.

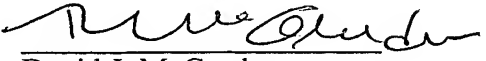
Claim 1 has been amended to clarify that the longitudinal slots are "oriented generally parallel to an axis of said cylindrical structure". This feature is not taught or suggested in the '321 patent. The notches (60) of the '321 patent are generally round, not longitudinal, and are not "oriented generally parallel to an axis of said cylindrical structure" as recited in amended claim 1.

Accordingly, it is submitted that amended claim 1, as well as claims 8-10 which depend therefrom, are patentable over the '321 patent.

Furthermore, the Applicant respectfully requests consideration of the withdrawn claims 2-7 and 11-16 which are directed to species I, II, III and V as identified by the Examiner, since it is submitted that the generic claim 1 is allowable.

The applicant respectfully requests reconsideration of this application. As all of the rejections contained in the Office Action have been traversed, it is submitted that this application is now in condition for allowance, which is respectfully requested.

Respectfully submitted,

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3/7

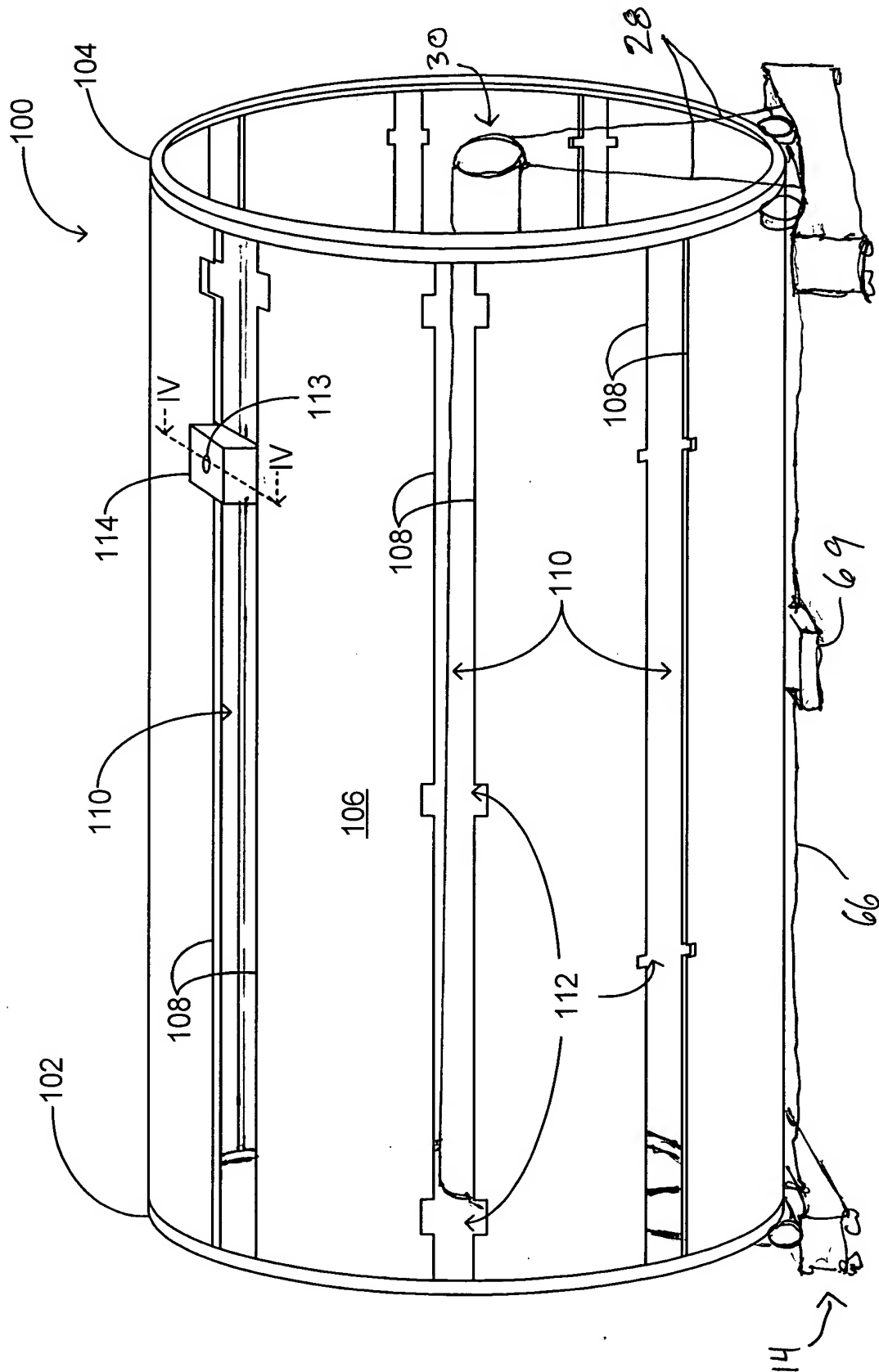


Figure 3